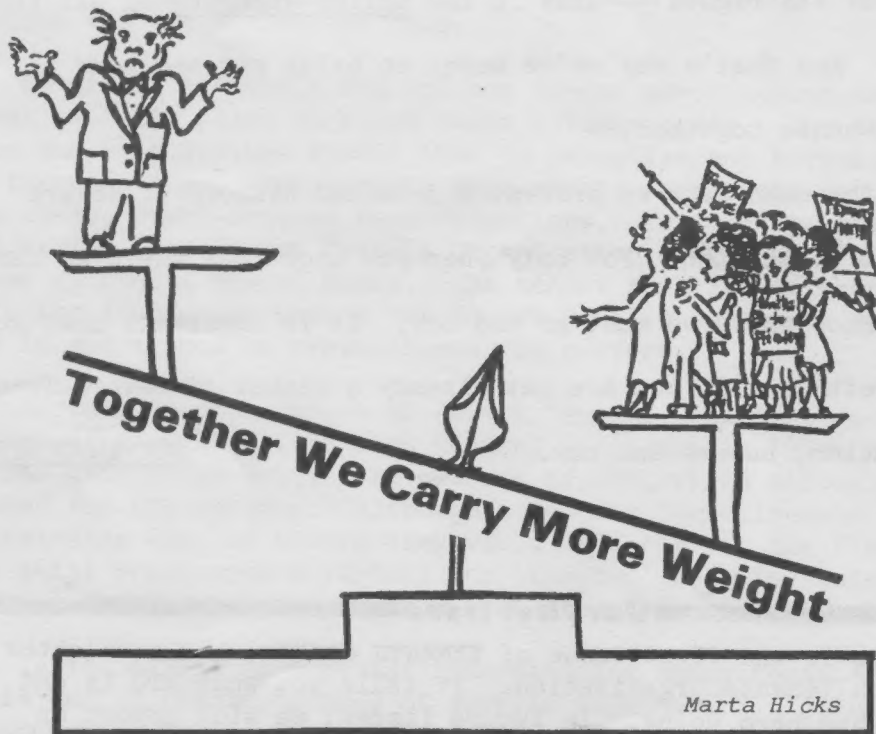


Tenants United

A Publication of Newark Tenants Organization

NUMBER 1

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JOIN THE FIGHT TO SAVE RENT CONTROL.....see page 9

Now That We Have Your Attention...

...we'd like to tell you what Newark Tenants Organization is all about. We're not an agency that gives you incomplete answers and refers you to other agencies. We're a citywide organization made up of tenants just like you. The only answer to Newark's housing problems -- the problems of unsafe, indecent and unsanitary conditions, and a tenant population denied of many of its rights -- lies in the united strength of all its tenants. And that's why we're here: to bring you and your fellow tenants together.

On the next page we present a detailed history of Newark Tenants Organization. For only when you know from where we came can you know where we must go and how. It is important that you read carefully. If you are not already a member of Newark Tenants Organization, become one now.

GET INVOLVED!

Our First Issue

This is the first issue of **TENANTS UNITED**, the newsletter of Newark Tenants Organization. It tells you what NTO is and what it has been doing. In future issues, we will report on how NTO is working with tenants around the city to make *change*. We want your comments. You are as much a part of us as we are of you.

Who Is NTO?

A group of concerned people from two buildings on South 10th and South 11th Streets began fighting for decent living conditions in 1969. They were struggling with a landlord who refused to make any repairs and was attempting to evict them. To gain support in this fight they went to their landlord's other buildings in Newark and talked to the tenants living there. They learned that the other tenants were facing the same problems. Together they organized as a tenant association, since they all had learned that when they acted on their own no one paid attention.

In the early 1970's this group grew into a city-wide organization. Weekly meetings were held for tenants to discuss their problems and get advice and help.

At first, slumlords did not see tenant associations as a threat to their plans to bleed their buildings dry. But demonstrations and rent strikes forced them to recognize and bargain with the tenant groups. The results were repair agreements and, in some cases, court-ordered rent reductions. The most talked about rent strike that Newark Tenants Organization member participated in was at Stella Wright Homes. The tenant association there held rents for four years before the Newark Housing Authority and H.U.D. gave in and agreed to rehabilitate the project.

Another accomplishment of Newark Tenants Organization was the passage of Newark's first Rent Control Ordinance in 1973. This law was originally written by members of NTO, which strongly lobbied for its passage. Although some City Councilpeople insisted on weakening the law before they would vote for it, the final version still represents a victory for tenants. Rent increases for most tenants in the city are now limited to 5%, once a year.

In its effort to increase understanding among tenants of their rights and of the importance of working together, NTO joined with the Community Housing Education Corporation and other Essex County tenants organizations to form a *People's Law School* in 1975.

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The school has held two sessions in which tenant leaders and lawyers taught classes on law, housing economics and organizing. Fall classes will begin on October 18 (see the announcement on *page 11* for details).

NTO is currently working on an Emergency Repair Ordinance for Newark. This proposal would enable tenants to have the city hire contractors to repair dangerous conditions in their apartments when landlords refuse or are unable to have the work done themselves. Landlords would be required to post a security deposit of their own with the city. If the city had to make repairs to an apartment, the landlord's deposit would be used to pay the bill. It is expected that this proposal will come before the City Council this fall.

People who are interested in learning more or who would like some help in organizing their building are encouraged to visit the NTO office at 944 Broad Street.



Get It In Writing

There are many things a tenant should look into when first renting an apartment, *especially in Newark*. Landlords have the advantage because there are so few vacant apartments. Make sure you know what you're getting into:

1. *Before putting any money down*, go over the apartment carefully to make sure there are no serious defects.
2. Find out whether you or the landlord is responsible for utilities and heat. If they're included in your rent, *get it in writing*.
3. Know what is supposed to come with the apartment, such as a refrigerator or stove. Make sure they are in working order. If not, see that the landlord agrees in writing to have it fixed, *before you move in*.
4. *Get in writing* what the landlord is responsible for doing to get the apartment ready for you. Have the landlord sign and date this agreement. Once you move in and you don't have it in writing, it is harder to get things done and to prove the landlord promised to have them done.
5. Once you have done this, put your money down. Make sure *you get a receipt*, stating that this is for security and that it is dated and signed by the landlord.

Tenants Join Together To Make Change

All over Newark, tenants are finding that they are more powerful when they fight as a group. Here are a few examples of how in the last year building organizations have made progress through unity:

*Soon after 200 tenants at the *Julio Salgado Apartments* organized themselves and began a rent strike, city officials and representatives from Prudential Insurance Company came to listen to the tenants' complaints.

*The *Blackstone Tenants Association* at 469 Elizabeth Avenue appealed a Rent Control Board decision granting their landlord a 12 percent hardship rent increase - AND WON! It marked the first time tenants in Newark have taken such action.

*The tenants association at 311-317 *Osborne Terrace* discovered who their landlord really is and were able to confront him directly.

*Some of the members of *The Hill Manor Apartments Tenants Association* received rent abatements in Landlord-Tenant Court because they had no heat or hot water.

*The tenants association at *Brick towers* on High Street led a rent strike to fight poor maintenance and bad management.

YOU too can take these types of action if you band together with your neighbors. DON'T WAIT for a crisis to develop.

What You Can Do

HELP ORGANIZE YOUR BUILDING. Only by being organized, will landlords, officials, legislators and judges begin to listen to and recognize tenants.

SPREAD THE WORD about NTO. This newsletter will reach only a limited number of tenants.

HELP NTO as it plots strategies, confronts legislators and administrators, and supports fellow tenants in their court battles.

VOLUNTEER to work at the NTO office.

DONATE YOUR SERVICE. NTO needs tenants who are concerned and dedicated. No tenant in Newark is without a useful skill. We at NTO can show you how to use those sometimes unrecognized skills to further the tenant movement.

Tenants Seek Investigation of Rent Control Board

Public hearings will be held shortly on the actions of the Newark Rent Control Board. Councilwoman Marie Villani announced that the City Council is interested in hearing complaints by tenants who have had problems with the Board.

Newark Tenants Organization and other groups from around the city have been asking for an investigation of the Board. They cite many cases where Board members and the Administrator have disregarded or misinterpreted the ordinance. In each case tenants were hurt by these mistakes: all had their rents increased by too much, some were later evicted. Tenants have also charged that employees at the Rent Control office are biased against them and make every effort to help landlords.

Every resident of Newark who has a complaint or who is interested in seeing the Rent Control Ordinance enforced in a fair way is encouraged to attend the public hearings. Please watch for an announcement in the *Star-Ledger* regarding the time and place.

Do You Want Another 3% Increase?

TENANTS OF NEWARK: Do you want a 3% RENT INCREASE?

The only way to prevent this is by writing your councilperson, telling her/him your feelings about it. They are the ones who vote on the passage of the increase - *not you or I*. We must make it known to them that 80% of Newark's population, who are renters, oppose this amendment to the rent control ordinance.

Landlords have also pressured the Council. By convincing the Council that some sort of "*compromise*" necessary, a meeting was set up by them between landlord spokesman Thomas Petrillo, tenant representative Frank Hutchins and Rent Control Administrator Shirley Green with the City Council present. No decision has been reached yet.

Any compromise is a sell-out, since it would most definitely result in a rent increase.

Why should we pay a 3% rent increase because our landlords' fuel bill goes up? We already give them their 5% yearly increase. What are they using it for? Have you seen any major improvements in your building recently?

BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, YOU MUST ACTIVELY FIGHT THIS RENT INCREASE!

If enacted, this amendment would give Newark landlords a 3% rent increase if their fuel bill increases 5% over the previous winter.

Already, tenant pressure forced the Council to postpone passage of the amendment once. There will be no victory, however until this rent increase is voted down permanently by the Council.

Speak Up For Your Rights

As you sit home reading this newsletter, someone at City Hall is making a decision that will affect the quality of YOUR life. That's right. YOUR LIFE! Make sure you've at least had your say in any future decisions. Every meeting conducted by a city agency, board or council is open to the public. Find out when and where they are. ATTEND!

To get you started, here's a list of some of the upcoming meetings:

CITY COUNCIL

October 19, City Hall, 1 p.m.
November 2, City Hall, 1 p.m.
November 14, City Hall, 8 p.m.
December 7, City Hall, 1 p.m.
December 21, City Hall 8 p.m.

ESSEX-NEWARK LEGAL SERVICES BOARD MEETINGS:

Every 4th Thursday of the month,
with exceptions for holidays.

RENT CONTROL HEARINGS

All at 7 p.m.

October 18, B21 City Hall
November 15, B21 City Hall
December 20, B21 City Hall

HOUSING AUTHORITY

All at 1 p.m.

October 19, Sussex Ave.
November 16, 57 Sussex Ave.
December 21, 57 Sussex Ave.

THE PEOPLE'S LAW SCHOOL

YES - YOU DO HAVE RIGHTS AS A TENANT!

DO YOU KNOW THEM?

The People's Law School is a series of classes and discussions for tenants on landlord/tenant law. It is being taught by tenant organizers with the help of local housing lawyers.

These classes are designed to give tenants the knowledge they need to make sure laws are not used against them. They give a tenant an opportunity to be able to study organizing techniques and skills. Other issues covered are : *evictions, rent increases and failure of landlords to make repairs.*

EIGHT weekly classes will be held on TUESDAY NIGHTS

Beginning - OCTOBER 18, 1977

A registration fee of \$5 includes a manual and other materials

sponsored by: Community Housing Education Corporation
Rutgers Urban Legal Clinic

for more information contact: Newark Tenants Organization
642-5255 or 642-5043

DID YOU KNOW ...

... that according to the *Newark Housing Code*, landlords are required to supply heat from September 1 through May 31? During the day (6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) the indoor temperature should be no lower than 68°F if the temperature outside is less than 50°F. At night (10 p.m. to 6 a.m.) the minimum indoor temperature permitted is 60°F if the outside temperature falls below 45°F.

REPORTERS

PROOFREADERS

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Needed to Volunteer Time

No Experience Needed

Call the TENANT VOICE

201-642-5255

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Do we have your correct address?

Please let us know if you have moved. It will save time and mailing costs.

NEWARK TENANTS ORGANIZATION
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NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07101